

THE FAITHFUL SAYING

NO. 1416

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”
1 Timothy 1:15.*

IT is worthy of notice that Paul, in the passage before us, as indeed in all his writings, exhibits great sensitiveness with regard to sin. The sin which he had himself committed against the Lord Jesus, looked at from some points of view, might have been greatly extenuated on account of the honest, although mistaken, motive which lay at the bottom of it. But Paul, after allowing for his ignorance, declares that of sinners he had been chief and that he obtained mercy that in him, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. He describes himself as having been “a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious” and he is evidently lost in grateful astonishment that he should have been saved. This godly sensitiveness with regard to sin was associated in the apostle’s mind with an equally vivid sense of the freeness and richness of divine grace. That Christ died, not for the righteous, but for the guilty, is the great thought which is upon his mind and he has no hesitancy whatever in declaring it, and in speaking most boldly concerning the exceedingly abundant grace of God in forgiving sin. The union of these two feelings in Paul is by no means an unusual occurrence among human minds, for you will generally find that the preacher who is most clear in his witness that salvation is by grace, is also the man to who sin is exceedingly sinful. Indeed, all those who prize grace most are men who feel most sorrow concerning their transgressions. All systems of theology, except that which is founded upon free grace, in some way or other take off the edge of guilt. If they try to compromise the business and make salvation to be partly a matter of human effort and human merit, and partly a work of divine grace, they are sure in the process to conceal the exceeding iniquity of sin. Man is made out to be a poor, weak creature, victimized by a law too rigid for his frailty. It is represented that he has a right to mercy and a great uproar is made if we deny him any such right. And much anger is felt if we declare that mercy is the sovereign prerogative of God, and may be exercised at His own absolute discretion. Rebellion against divine election is often founded on the idea that the sinner has a sort of right to be saved and this is to deny the full guilt of sin. You will find that he who sets forth free grace as the only fountain and source of human salvation, and declares that sin is pardoned and put away freely by the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, is most plain and severe in denouncing sin with all his might and most tender in sorrowing over his own personal iniquities. I shall preach grace to the chief of sinners at this time without reserve and without guarding my words in any respect whatever. I shall fling the big net of the gospel right into the sea. Let it go where it may. But do not therefore conclude that we think little of sin, far from it. It is to us the sum of all abominations and the fire of hell. And this, I trust, shall be apparent all along, though for the present we shall confine our thoughts to the greatness of the grace of God, since to that subject our text summons us.

The apostle Paul had been describing himself and his sin. He confessed that he was before, a blasphemer and a persecutor, “But,” he says, “I obtained mercy.” His was an instance of a sinner saved and he now declares that his case was a type of all others, for Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The tendency is to set up the apostle as an exceptional convert, but he corrects the idea by asserting the grand doctrine that the Savior’s errand was to those who are guilty and undeserving, among whom he counted himself to be the chief. This coming of Christ to save sinners as sinners, he regards as a truth so well known in the Christian church that it had come to be a *saying*, “familiar in their mouths as household words.” It had become a sort of proverb with Christians that Christ Jesus came to save sinners and Paul says that it might justly be received as a proverb among all nations, for it was worthy of universal acceptance from the weight of its meaning, the importance of its subject and the divine authority with which it was sealed. Moreover, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners is so true that

it is not merely a saying, but a *faithful* saying, worthy of all confidence, being as sure as the truth of God, Himself. Pass it round, you Christians, repeat it among yourselves without the slightest hesitancy or question. Let it be a proverb among you, an undoubted fact, and a truth unquestionable. For the salvation of sinners, Jesus came into the world. He contemplated the saving of no other sort of persons but those who are sinful.

I. Our first observation from this statement will be THAT SINNERS ARE IN AN AWFUL CONDITION. A man who needs saving is evidently in a very undesirable state. Now, every man and woman among you this day who has not been saved by Christ Jesus needs to be saved. You have kept the law, you say, from your youth up, so what do you lack? My answer is that you need saving, notwithstanding your fine ideas about yourselves. But you have been religious also from your earliest recollection and you do not know that you have ever committed anything very wrong. Dear friend, despite your morality and outward religiousness, we are compelled to tell you that you need saving just as surely as the unchaste or the profane. Despite all that you say in your own favor, you have broken the law of God and you are a sinner. And as a sinner you are in a terrible position, from which nothing can save you but the hand of God.

For, first, *it is a grave peril to be a sinner*. You have broken your Maker's command, is not that a calamity? You have neglected His will, which is holy and just and good, is not that a crying evil? To have a heart which does not choose the right, but which leans to evil, is not that ruinous? To have a mind which does not love God, but cares for itself more than for its Maker and Lord, is not that to be in a diseased state of soul? You are not in a fit state to judge, but holy beings think it so. The polluting influence of sin upon the soul is the direst of all mischief, the worst of all destructions, it is spiritual death. From the defiling presence of sin every man needs to be saved.

Moreover, *the thrice holy God hates sin* with hatred scarcely to be conceived by any of us since we have lost the sensitiveness of perfect purity. Whatever things are impure, unchaste, untrue, unloving, unrighteous, God loathes with all the infinity of His perfect nature. Doubtless sin is a grief to godly men, but it is far more obnoxious to the Lord our God. "The wicked and him that loves violence, His soul hates." "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord." The Lord has fierce indignation against everything that is evil. This is no arbitrary trait of His character, He does not choose to be angry with this or angry with that without a cause, but from the very necessity of His divine nature He must delight in everything that is good, and He must abhor everything that is evil. O sinner, what a plight you are in since there is in you and upon you the sin which God cannot endure. What must your position be, for it is written concerning the Lord, "You hate all workers of iniquity," and such are you? Can you bear the thought?

Furthermore, *you are condemned* and before long this will be made evident to all intelligent beings. There comes upon the swift wings of time a day in which the Judge of all the earth will lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and every transgression and iniquity shall receive its just recompense of reward. It is not possible that it should be otherwise, for there must come a reaping to every sowing. Idle thoughts, idle words and evil deeds must bear their fruit, and therefore every sinner is in danger of eternal fire. As surely as the righteous through Christ shall go into everlasting happiness, so shall the ungodly depart into everlasting punishment where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. And this may happen to any unpardoned sinner before he has heard the next word which I am about to utter. He may find himself shut out from all hope, eternally shut out from God before yonder clock shall strike. This is a perilous condition for an immortal soul! Yet every sinner not saved by Christ is in this condition!

To this may be added the further reflection that *the sinner is quite unable of himself to escape* either from sin itself, or from the wrath which he has awakened, or from the punishment which is appointed for his transgressions. What can you do, O Ethiopian, to change your skin? O leopard, how can you remove your spots? And if, being evil, you could learn to do good, how could you put away the sin of the past? By what process could you take out the stains of former years? Do not the sins of your youth lie in your bones even to this day? And they must be there forever unless the strong hand of Christ shall take them away. One of old cried, "O generation of vipers, how shall you escape the damnation of hell?" And the question may well be asked of the most cunning and crafty of sinners. If you neglect the great salvation, which it shall be our joy to preach to you today, how shall you escape from the wrath to come? Shut up, as within a wall of fire, with that fire already burning within his soul in the form of evil lusts and draw-

ing nearer to him from without every day he lives, the sinner is in a terrible position indeed. O unforgiven sinner, what do you think of this?

Perhaps that position may be all the better defined, if I remind you of the way by which a sinner has to be rescued from it. There is no hope for any sinner unless the Son of God Himself saves Him. You may safely measure the depth of the danger by the glory of the person who undertook to deliver us from it. It is the Son of God whom angels worship who has come to save sinners. It must be a deep destruction from which only God Himself can rescue man. And though He was the Son of God, yet when He came, observe how He had to be equipped, and from His equipment learn the sternness of the task. He must be Jesus—a Savior and then He must also be Christ—anointed for the work. He must come with a commission from God with divine authority, and the Spirit of God must rest upon Him to qualify Him for the great undertaking. For the text says not that *Jesus* came into the world, but *Christ Jesus*, the anointed Savior, came that He might save. If this equipment was needed, then surely the state of man was a grievous one. Note also that even Christ Jesus could not save men had He stayed in heaven. He *came into the world* to save sinners. The Fall was so grievous that He must come right down into the place of our ruin. He must come to the dunghill that He might lift us out of it. God sat in heaven and said, “Let there be light,” and the darkness fled before Him. But He could not sit in heaven and save sinners, He must come into the world to do so, down into this polluted creation the eternal Creator must Himself descend. Look, there in Bethlehem’s manger He sleeps and on a woman’s breast He hangs! He cannot save sinners, so great is their ruin, unless He becomes incarnate and takes upon Himself our nature. And being here, think how dreadful must be the ruin when we see that He cannot return, saying, “It is finished,” until, first of all, He dies. That sacred head must be crowned with thorns, those eyes must be closed in the darkness of the tomb, that body must be pierced even to its heart and then must lie a chill, cold corpse in the grave before man can be redeemed. And all that shame, suffering and death were but the outer shell of what the Savior suffered, for He passed under divine wrath and bore a load such as would have crushed the whole race of men had they been left to bear it. O sinner, you are awfully lost, you are infinitely lost, since it needs an infinite Savior to present the atonement of His own body in order to save sinners from their sin. This is the first truth then, which is included in this faithful saying, may the Holy Spirit write it on our hearts.

II. The second observation which clearly contains the very heart of the text is THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME TO SAVE MEN AS SINNERS. His salvation is meant for men who are sinners and for none else. Somebody says, “But is not that a plain matter of fact?” It is, but it is a fact scarcely realized. Indeed, its real meaning is not known until God the Holy Spirit reveals it. A great many persons have a notion that Christ Jesus came into the world to save respectable people, who if they have done any wrong have repented of it and have made things square. He came, according to them, to save persons who do their very best by attendance at worship, taking the sacrament, giving to the poor, paying their way and saying their prayers. These are doing all they can to get right and keep right, and surely they will be saved, so men talk. Their theory of salvation is very mixed, but it comes to this, that the gospel is for good people. They do not quite do without Jesus Christ—He comes in somewhere or other. But their religion is a kind of mangle-mangle—partly they save themselves and partly Christ saves them, and between the two they are not saved at all. Their vain fancy is that, though they cannot do quite as much as they ought, Jesus comes in as an excellent make-weight and turns the scale in their favor. That is the notion of the bulk of mankind and in many places of worship you may hear something very much like it. Too much of the preaching of the present day mingles the old covenant with the new. You do not know whether after all you are going to be saved by merit or mercy, whether Christ came to save sinners or the righteous. The trumpet gives an uncertain sound.

It is far too generally supposed that there must be something to recommend the sinner to God and that God could not send His Son to save men whom He views in the base and horrible character of sinners. “Surely,” say the enemies of free grace, “He must have regard to their repentance or to something which He either sees or foresees in them.” That He should see man to be evil and only evil and yet visit Him in mercy for mercy’s sake seems hard for the carnal heart to believe. Therefore, lest we should be misunderstood, we lay down this straight line that Christ did not come into the world to save anybody but sinners, and He viewed those sinners as sinners and nothing more. He did not view them as repenting sinners, nor as believing sinners, nor as humble sinners, nor as sanctified sinners, nor anything else but sinners, and under that character He contemplated their salvation. The text says nothing more and

nothing less than that, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinners*.” There is not a qualifying word.

It is clear that only sinners are the objects of salvation, for none but sinners need saving. And if there had been no sinners there would certainly have been no *saving* and no *Savior*. Who needs saving but a lost man? Who needs a Savior but a man who through his sin has ruined himself? The very term, “Savior” and the very name “Jesus” imply that salvation work is for sinners. We have some sinecure offices in our Government. I have heard of a Master of the Buckhounds, who never mastered a buckhound in his life. But my Lord Jesus holds no sinecure in His office of Savior, for there are plenty of sinners and He is always saving them. If sinners are not contemplated by the plan of grace, then the office of Savior is obsolete. But this can never be, since He is Jesus Christ, the anointed Savior, the same yesterday, today and forever.

Nor would *the gospel* be required for any but sinners, since none but the guilty, need glad tidings of pardon and grace. If man can be secure under the law, let him stay under the law. If the law can justify, let the law justify. What need of a second system to take away the first unless through the weakness of man the first system shall be found to be of no effect? No, verily the law is glorious. Mount Sinai shines resplendently and verily perfection would have been by the law if it could have been kept by mankind. No need for another glory or excellence, for the first would have sufficed if men had not been sinners, for the law is holy, just and good. The very sound of that word “gospel” is lost, and its sweetness dissipated in the midnight air unless there are sinners, for they above all men, need glad tidings of a Savior born among men.

Salvation must be for sinners, for to them only can *mercy* ever come. If I am brought before a court of justice and I plead, “Not guilty,” and the magistrate replies that he will have mercy upon me, I repel his observation with indignation. I need no mercy of him. I am innocent. Let him give me justice, and that is all I ask. It is an insult to the innocent to offer him mercy, and therefore unless man is guilty God cannot show him mercy. Mercy has no room to bestow her blessings of amnesty and pardon, till first of all guilt is admitted. To the sinner forgiveness can come, but to none else.

Moreover, *the characters that Jesus came to save are always so described that they must be sinners*. Sometimes we read of them as being, “dead in trespasses and sins,” and it is written, “And you has He quickened.” Sometimes they are represented as enemies, “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” They are called aliens, strangers, wandering sheep, prodigal sons and so forth. And all these imply distance from God by sin. Sometimes they are represented as debtors, and when they have nothing to pay He freely forgives them all their debt. All the descriptions of persons for whom the mercy of God is intended bear upon their forefront the notion of their being sinners and our Lord Himself says, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” The coming of Christ has no bearing towards the ninety-nine that went not astray, except that they are left where they were. The Good Shepherd comes after the lost sheep and only after the lost sheep and if you can prove that you are not a lost sheep, then you have proved that Christ never came to save you. The whole of His errand, looks this way, He came to save sinners and only sinners.

Look now at *what He did* when He was here. I will only ask you to consider the crowning act of His work when He hung upon the cross. What do those bruises from the scourge mean? What do those deep furrows on His blessed back mean? What do those pierced hands and feet mean? They mean this, that, He is suffering on account of human sin. “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.” “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Self-righteous men and women, what has the cross to do with you? You carry it on your bosoms and make an ornament and a plaything of it, and that is all it is to you. None but the guilty can know the true meaning of the cross and derive benefit from it. For them the dreadful tree bears the precious fruit of substitutionary sacrifice, and peace and pardon through the atoning blood. But to those who are not sinners the cross is a barren tree. O Christ of God, only a sinner can know Your worth. A saint may admire You in Your glory, but a sinner trusts You in Your shameful death, for You are meant for sinners. “He gave Himself for our sins”—for what else could He give Himself and yield Himself unto death?

Besides that, where is Jesus gone now but to heaven? And *what is He doing*? When He went to heaven He received gifts for men and listen to this Word!—“Yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” He pleads today, but for who is He an advocate? He makes intercession

for the transgressors. Prove that you are not rebellious nor transgressors, and there are neither gifts nor pleadings for you, for the whole drift of what He is now doing is towards the sinful.

Look, sirs, at the legacy which our Lord has left us. He has left us the Holy Spirit and what for? The Holy Spirit is here to convict of sin. Of what use would He be to those who have no sin? He is here to regenerate, but of what use would He be to those who are so good by nature that they do not need a change of heart? He is here that He may work in us repentance and faith, but of what use would those be to persons who have no sin to repent of and no need to believe in a Savior? The whole plan and scheme of redemption contains in it marks and evidences clear and tangible that it is meant for sinners, for guilty men, for such and such alone. All else that there is in man beside his sinnership is not truly his. If I were to preach today to sinners with some qualification, I should not be preaching the gospel in its fullest reach. If, for instance, I were to say that Christ Jesus came into the world to save humble sinners, that would be a clipping of the truth, for if any sinner is humble, that humility is not natural to him, but already the work of salvation commenced, and in his being has made him humble. Jesus Christ died to give humility to sinners as well as to save them when they are humble. But surely we must believe in Christ? Yes, and there is salvation for believing sinners, but no man believes in Christ until that faith is given to Him from above, and Christ came not to save sinners who make themselves believe, but to save sinners by giving them faith. He not only saves sinners when they repent, but He goes lower down, for He is exalted on high to give repentance as well as remission of sins. But did He not die for penitent sinners? Assuredly, but He died for them when they were impenitent, and therefore it is that they come to repentance. He who would come to Jesus must come as a sinner, and never think of pleading any sort of goodness or qualification, for “this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” SINNERS—write that in capitals and set it by itself, for it is the whole of the description and no one may dare to add to it. Away with your human addition of *sensible* sinners, and so on, the text is not cumbered and spoiled by any such qualifying words.

III. This leads me, in the third place, to say THAT UPON THIS POINT SPECIAL CLEARNESS IS REQUIRED. That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners as sinners must always be kept clearly before the human mind because, as I have said, man does not like the notion and if you put it baldly and boldly he quibbles at it and waxes wrathful. Hear him mutter about immoral doctrine and encouraging sin. Hear it and marvel at the audacity which makes a guilty rebel express anxiety about the morals of his God. A set of criminals are shut up in a condemned cell to be hanged, and a message comes that the king freely forgives them, and they exclaim that they will not accept mercy because it might encourage immorality. Morality! What have these lawbreakers to do with that? Surely they are repeating the devil’s hypocrisy when he rebuked sin. They are living in sin and yet pretend to be the guardians of universal justice. Vile hypocrisy! When I have known the pens which have written against the gospel under the pretense of advancing morality, I have pitied the paper which they defiled with their black words. Pleaders for morality! Why, men known to be debauched and drunken are often the very loudest talkers against free grace, and the greatest sticklers for morality. Let them go and wash in Jordan seven times and be clean themselves before coming out in that fashion. It is for you and me, being guilty, to get mercy first, and then talk of what we will do in the matter of morality. Know you not that the man who believes not in Christ is condemned already? Shall a condemned man quibble at mercy’s freeness? On your knees, sir, and plead guilty before the Most High, for so only shall you find grace.

How often are we told in sermons that we are in a state of probation, as if we had to do something by which we should prove our worthiness and were still in a position in which we might or might not be condemned? My hearers, you are not in a state of probation, no, not one of you. If you are saved, you are saved, and if you are not saved you are lost. You are forgiven, or else you are “condemned already” and unless Jesus Christ saves you, you will abide in condemnation forever and ever. The die is cast, man, and cast against you! You are condemned and in the book of God so it stands. Christ Jesus came to save the condemned and blessed shall you be if you are willing to take up the condemned position at this moment and accept the grace which He has brought for sinners. I say, then, let the truth be made clear, because man will muddle it if he can.

Mark you, *if this doctrine is not made clear, you will not lead sinners to look to Christ.* If I preach that Jesus Christ died to save men of tender heart, what will be the result of the sermon? Every thoughtful hearer will look to see whether he has a tender heart. Is that a desirable result?—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,”

but there is no life by looking into our own hearts. Suppose I preach certain marks and evidences as tokens of the men whom Christ came to save? Then each man will look to see whether he has those tokens within himself, and that is precisely the thing which we do not want men to do, for we desire them to look right away from themselves to Christ alone. If they should imagine that they find some good thing within themselves, they will make it the basis of their hope and that will be an error of the gravest kind. Sinner, all the hope you can ever have lies in Him who died upon the tree. As for yourself, settle it in your mind that you are as bad as bad can be. Give over all hope from your own doings, willings, feelings and resolves, and no more expect to obtain comfort from your own nature than to find fire in the midst of a rock of ice. Look right away from self to Christ, and Christ alone, for this is the way of salvation.

When a man comes to Christ as a sinner, he has taken *the safest way*. If I say to myself, "Jesus came to save me because I am a believing sinner, or a repenting sinner, or a humbled sinner," then I have to ask the question, "How about my repentance, my humility, are they genuine?" My foundation shakes and my trust fails me, because it rests on myself, but when I trust in Jesus because He is the sinner's Savior and because I am a sinner, then I am beyond doubtful questions.

This also is *a constant ground* to go upon. Imagine a man who is deeply in debt saying to his creditors, "I am in a terrible fix, but I can promise you ten shillings in the pound." Very well, they accept it. Is he not at ease? Let me whisper in your ear—he is not worth two pence in the entire world. Is he clear? Oh no. He tries a little trading, and puts off the hour of payment, but again he has to call his creditors together and confess, "I am sorry. I cannot manage the ten shillings, but I will try to scrape together two-and-sixpence, will you take that?" Yes, they will take the half-crown. Is he out of his difficulties, now? No, he is not one inch nearer, for he is not worth a penny. Again he summons his creditors and tells them that he has made another mistake, but he could arrange to pay sixpence. Is he at rest now? Not a bit, because he has not a penny and he can no more pay sixpence in the pound than the whole twenty shillings. He is absolutely a pauper. What is the best thing for him to do? Why, to admit the truth and say, "Here I am. I have no assets whatever. I am in debt over head and ears and I have not a single penny to pay with. Do whatever you like with me. Put me in prison if you like, sell these bones and the rags which cover them, but there is the truth, you cannot get anything out of me because I have nothing." Now, if the creditors give him a clear discharge, he is safe and at rest, which he never was while he had even a sixpence to pay. Now needy sinners, be wise and go to the Lord in that penniless style, and you shall have your debt frankly forgiven. Remember the parable of the two debtors and the truth which it teaches—

*"But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have nothing to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all."*

Assuredly, there is nothing like going to the bottom of a thing and knowing the worst of your case. I have a friend who had a bad knee, something ailed it, and he could not tell what. The doctors blistered, applied poultices and did a great deal to it, and showed their skill by making bad, worse, but they assured him that the knee was not out of joint, but would come all right by outward applications. Under such professional treatment the patient became quite lame. At last he went to a renowned bone-setter and as soon as he saw the joint, he said, "I tell you, sir, your bone is out." "Impossible," he said, "the doctors have never hinted at that." "Yes, it is, or if it is not so, we will make it so, and then set it right." With a terrible pull the operator seemed to drag the bone out of its place and then it flew back again, into its socket and my friend felt that all was right. "Now," said the bone-setter, "walk across the room," and he did so at once. There is nothing like knowing that the bone is out, for then it can be set. But while we understate the mischief, we shall not find an effectual cure. Reckon on the worst and you will not be deceived. If there is something good about you and you begin trusting in it, that something good will grow less and less, like the twenty shillings which came down to sixpence and ended with nothing. But if you throw up all legal hope and say, "I am a sinner, and if I am saved it must be entirely through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and I accept Christ to save me as a sinner,"—that is a sure and constant foundation to rest upon. Beware of the slippery belief that Christ died for you as long as you are humble, or as long as you are this or that, for, if you talk in that fashion, instead of trusting in Christ you are trusting in your own humility, your own feelings, and there is no soundness in your faith.

Often, beloved, I feel that this way of coming to Christ, as a sinner, is the *only available one* for me. I have preached the gospel, not without zeal for the truth, and have tried to consecrate my whole being to my Lord's service, but times out of mind I would not give a brass farthing for all that I have done or felt or been. But I am glad to sink the whole in oblivion and come to Christ and say, "Save me, for I have sinned." What I rejoice to do, I feel sure that my brethren have to do also, and it will be your safety to be so doing continually.

Why, brethren, this doctrine must be true because *it glorifies Christ*. If Christ comes to save men who meet Him half way with their prayers and tears and beliefs and doings, and He only saves them because of these things, then salvation is half of man and half of Christ. But if it is so that Jesus comes to save sinners, and begins a work in them when they are in their nakedness and filthiness and spiritual death, oh, then, free grace does the more abound and the crown sits securely on the royal head of Him who is anointed to be both a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance as well as remission of sins.

I need to say also, that the recognition of the truth that Christ came into the world to save men as sinners is *essential to salvation*. You ask me, "How so?" I reply, "When a man comes before God simply as a sinner, he is then upon the line of truth." All the while he was claiming to be this and that which was good, he was on a false tack, but when he says, "Lord, I have broken Your law, I have done the things I ought not to have done and have left undone the things that I ought to have done. And if I am saved it must be by your grace alone," he is now speaking according to truth. It is something to bring a sinner round to the truth. When he has come to that, he will go further in the right direction. Do you not see that he is doing homage to the law of God, for he confesses that he has broken it and deserves punishment? Thus the man is already honoring the law of God in his heart, his salvation has begun. Now he does honor to God Himself, for he bows before the Most High and begs for mercy. He is already saved from presumption. God must be King, and the man is willing that He should be, even though he himself should be condemned. And now he reads that God's salvation "comes to the guilty," and he cries, "I am guilty. I accept Your mercy." That done, he loves the Lord God for mercy received. Why, the man is being saved before our eyes. He was the enemy of God before, but now a sense of free mercy causes him to love and fear the Lord. The next thing he says is, "Have I been so freely forgiven all my transgressions, not because of anything I was or felt or did, but out of free mercy? Then, Lord, I will strive to avoid every sin, if You will help me." See, his mind is becoming pure and by the operation of the same blessed truth upon him, he will ultimately be perfected and stand before the throne complete, and what do you think will be his song? He will join with all the saints and sing, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." There is nothing like free grace to change the human heart. You may tell a man what he is and what he ought to be and he will remain unmoved. But tell him that God meets him as a lost, guilty and condemned sinner and that simply because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, He blots out all His sins and transgressions and accepts Him through Christ Jesus. Why, that makes the man's heart leap within him for joy, and then he begins to say, "Cleanse me, O God, from this hateful sin, for I love You because of Your wondrous love to me." Thus Jesus Christ's coming to save sinners makes the point of our being sinners a very essential one in the matter of our being saved from the power of sin.

IV. I close by saying, let us, dear friends, feel THAT IT WILL BE WISE TO ACCEPT AT ONCE THE TEACHING OF THE TEXT. Let us on the spot confess we are sinners. Whether you have been saved or not, come over again to Jesus. Take with you words and say unto Him, "We have sinned." Confess your sinnership. Does it trouble you to do so? Have not you abundant evidence of it? Do not confess it with your mouth only, but with your heart. Let me tell you, sinners are very rare things, you cannot find them dead or alive. If you go into a cemetery with an intelligent child, the first question it will ask will be, "Papa, where do they bury the sinners? These are all good people who are buried here." Living sinners are equally scarce. We are all surprisingly good, and though we say, "We are sinners," that is a part of our goodness, for it shows how very humble we are. If we come to details and are questioned as to our sins, how many turn out to be no more sinners than the beggars in the street are really lame, or blind, or sick, or sore? Many who say, "Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners," do but sham their sinnership before God. Now, mark, there is nothing but sham salvation for sham sinners. But you real sinners, you who have broken God's law and know it, and are ready to stand upon the drop of confession beneath the fatal tree of justice feeling that you could not say a word against divine justice if you

were now executed, come and welcome, for Jesus Christ came to save such as you are. Confess your sins and when you have done so, rest on the salvation provided in Christ Jesus.

At this moment I think I speak the language of every child of God when I say the top and bottom, the beginning and the ending of all my hope lies in this, that, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I just trust myself as a sinner with Him. The devil often tells me, “You are not this, and you are not that,” and I feel bound to acknowledge that the accuser of the brethren makes terrible work with my spiritual finery, so that I have to abandon one ground of glorying after another. But I never knew the devil himself dare to say, “You are not a sinner.” He knows I am and I know it, too. And as in due time Christ died for the ungodly, I just rest in Him and I am saved. If I can perish resting in Christ I must do so. But I will tell it throughout the realms of hell that I did trust in Christ and was lost. I will publish it in the infernal dens that I trusted in Jesus with all my soul and was confounded. Will it ever be? No, never, for He has said, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Poor sinner, whoever you may be, surely this is a very simple matter. But do not reject it because it is so simple. It is your life. You shall find it your life at this very instant if you will trust my Lord. Have you any doubt about your being a sinner? Then bid farewell to hope, for Christ did not come to save you! But if you know you are a sinner, cast yourself on Jesus now, even now, just as you are. “Will He save me?” Try it, brother, try it, sister. Sink or swim, fling yourself upon Christ. Are you still holding to your prayers or your tears, or somewhat of your own? You will perish if you do. You must be disconnected with all grounds of self-hope and self-trust or they will prove your ruin. Now cut the cable. Let every rope go. Break the last thread and commit yourself to the tide of free grace. You will never be a wreck if you do so. Well does Dr. Watts put it—

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall!
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.”*

“You have taken away from us, sir, every hope we ever had, and you make us out to be nothing but sinners.” Yes, that is what I want to do. I long to make all things rock and reel under you till you feel that you have no place for the sole of your feet, and so fall before my Master’s cross. This old house of yours which you have been patching up so often will fall upon you before long. Its walls bulge, its roof drops, its timbers are rotten. However much you try to prop it up, it will come down and destroy you. I, as an architect, advise you to tear it all down. Clear every wall away, stick and stone. Yes, and take out the very foundations, for every stone is ruinous. Clear the ground of the whole concern. You complain that there is a deep and ugly trench where the foundations used to be and I am glad of it, for, behold, the Lord lays in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, elect, precious, even Christ Jesus. And he that believes in Him shall never be confounded. You must remove all the wood, hay and stubble, and build with precious stones. None but Jesus, none but Jesus! Neither beam, nor stone, nor pin, nor nail must be our own. We may not take from a thread to a shoelace of self, but Christ must be first, last, midst and everywhere. What do you say, fellow sinners? Will you and I have Christ? I will, whether you will or not. Come along. Do not draw back. Take what God freely presents to you and from this day trust Jesus to be your Savior and we will meet in heaven. Amen.

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